

## THE NAMES OF TWO INDIAN VIPERS.

By

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TRIMERESURUS POPEIORUM, nom. nov.

The discovery by Mr. and Mrs. Pope that the snake generally known as *Trimeresurus gramineus*, the Common Green Pit Viper (*sensu* Boulenger), included four species, was due largely to their investigation of the hemipenis. This work has not yet met with general acceptance, but no one who has critically examined it can doubt the correctness of their observations.

The four species distinguished by them were *gramineus*, *stejnegeri*, *albolabris* and *occidentalis*. Two distinct types of hemipenis were defined, namely, a short spinous type found in *stejnegeri* and *occidentalis*, and a long, calyculate, spineless one, found in *gramineus* and *albolabris*. The character of the hemipenis is the only one by which *gramineus* (*sensu* Pope) can be distinguished from *stejnegeri*; in all external morphological characters the snakes resemble one another and none has been found yet by which to distinguish the females.

*T. gramineus* was restricted by them to the Indo-Chinese region, its most westerly limit being Darjeeling and the Jalpaiguri district in the Eastern Himalayas, a region which is mainly Indo-Chinese in its fauna. For the species which inhabits the Peninsula of India no name was available, and they called it *occidentalis*. This choice was unfortunate,, for the type locality of *T. gramineus* Shaw, based on Russell's 'Bodroo Pam', described and figured by him in his *Indian Serpents*, p. 13, pl. ix, is Vizagapatam, and is well outside the range of *gramineus* as defined by Mr. and Mrs. Pope. Russell's description of the colour is as follows:—'The head and trunk and tail of a fresh green; the last row of squamae on the belly yellow. The scuta of a pale straw colour and some of them have a small, green spot on each side.' This peculiar coloration of the ventrals, that is, the green of the dorsal scales, splashed over as it were, on to the ventrals, is well shewn in the coloured figure and it is found only, though not in every specimen, in the snake which inhabits the Peninsula of India.

I feel convinced therefore that the name *gramineus* Shaw should be applied to the Indian snake and *T. occidentalis* will become a synonym of it. For the *gramineus* of Mr. and Mrs. Pope no name is available and I have pleasure in connecting theirs with it.

ANCISTRODON NEPA Laurenti.

In 1908 Col. Wall described a new Viper from Ceylon under the name of *Ancistrodon millardi* (*J.B.N.H.S.*, xviii, p. 792). It

had been confused with *A. hypnale* Merrem but differed in having more ventrals and subcaudals and in slight differences in the proportions of the head shields. Later he discovered that the name *hypnale* should have been applied to the snake with the high ventral and caudal count and he therefore reversed the names (*idem*, xxx, 1925, p. 248). Such action however is not possible under the Rules of Zoological Nomenclature which state that a name once published cannot be rejected, even by its author, because of inappropriateness (Art. 32).

A name however is already available for this snake. An examination of the hemipenes of the two species shews that they differ from one another in exactly the same way as do *Trimeresurus stejnegeri* and *T. popeiorum*, the hemipenis of *hypnale* being calyculate and without spines, that of the other strongly spinous. This permits Laurenti's name *nepa* (*Coluber nepa*, *Syst. Rept.*, 1768, p. 97) based on a figure in Seba (I, pl. 19, fig. 7), and relegated by Boulenger with a query to the synonymy of *hypnale*, to be used. Seba's figure shews an undoubted Viper, like *hypnale*, with an everted and spinous hemipenis, the very character in fact which is needed for diagnosis. The fact that the snake was said to have come from Madagascar need not concern us, for many of Seba's localities are known to be incorrect. Moreover no member of the Viperidae is known to inhabit that Island.